

Fraternity Hall
Elkhorn, Jefferson County
Montana

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
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FRATERNITY HALL

Elkhorn, Jefferson County, Montana

LOCATION: In the ghost town of Elkhorn, 22 miles northeast of Boulder, Montana, at the foot of Crow and Elkhorn peaks.

OWNER: Unknown

OCCUPANT: None

USE: Deserted

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The two story structure that held a lodge hall on the second floor and a large room with a stage that served as a community dance hall-meeting room on the first floor provided a social center for one of the Montana gold and silver mining towns that flourished in the late nineteenth century.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and Subsequent Owners: Unknown, due to a lack of written records.
2. Date of Erection: Believed to have been in the 1890's when Elkhorn was at its peak of operation.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Builder: Unknown.

5. Original Plans: None known to exist.

6. Notes on Alterations and Additions: It appears that minor revisions were made in the interior partitions of the second floor. Date unknown.

7. Important Old Views: None

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. A building of unusual design built in one of Montana's later gold and silver mining towns. Gold was discovered in Bannack in 1862, then in the Alder Gulch area in 1863, and shortly after in the Helena region.

2. Peter Wys discovered the Elkhorn mine about 1870 but the yield did not encourage full operation until the 1880's. Gold and silver mining reached its peak in the 1890's and early 1900's.

3. The Elkhorn Mining Company was formed in 1883. Estimates of gold and silver taken from this area run up to thirty-two million dollars.

4. Operations in the town diminished in the 1930's and the town has become a ghost town with only a few inhabitants.

C. References:

1. Leeson, M.A., A History of Montana, 1739-1885, Chicago - Warner, Beers & Company, 1885.

2. Stout, Tom, Montana, Its Story and Biography, Chicago and New York - American Historical Society, 1921.

3. Miller, Joaquin, An Illustrated History of Montana, Chicago and New York, Lewis Publishing Company, 1921.

4. Conferences with relatives of inhabitants of Elkhorn.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The two story frame structure with its false front, typical of the Greek Revival influence on architecture in the western mining towns, has been modified with an ornate neo-classical cantilevered balcony and simulated pilaster and arch treatment of the false front (above the eaves line).

2. Condition of Structure: Fair.

B. Technical Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: 28'-1" x 72'-3".

2. Foundations: Native stone, rubble construction.

3. Wall Construction: Two story balloon frame structure of full 2" x 6" studs. The wall covering has lapped siding exposed 5" to the weather around the entire building. The front facade has a "band" of vertical boards running the full width of the building and set on top of the window and door head casings. Corner boards are 1x6s.

4. Chimney: None existent today.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The main (west) entrance has two wood five-paneled doors set in a rectangular frame. A transom of two lights completes the entry. The two rear doors (one recently torn off its hinges) are paneled one-light wood doors set in a rectangular frame work. The doorways have a transom of two lights. The second floor door (leading out onto the small cantilevered balcony) is a one-panel, one-light door set in a rectangular frame work and having a transom of two lights.

b. Windows: 2/2 double-hung wood sash. Simple squared stock exterior trim.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, Covering: A hip roof concealed behind a false front having a covering of hand-split wood shakes.
- b. Framing: Rafters of 2x6s and ceiling joists of 2x8s spaced 24" o.c. are tied together by diagonal 1x6s. Roof sheathing of 1x6s having 1-3/4" spacing between the boards.
- c. Cornice, Eaves: Eaves are boxed-in with the ceiling joist line extending horizontally to intersect the roof.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor Plans: The centrally located main doorway opens into an entry area. A staircase to the second floor leads off to the left (south). A small room (which does not have a door to the entry) is on the right. The entry leads to a single large assembly room having a raised stage at the east end of the room. The second floor has a small landing and a reception (or possibly lounge) room having an access door to the balcony. Several small storage rooms complete the width of the structure. From this lounge area a passageway formed by small cubicles leads into the lodge room. The lodge room occupies the full width of the building and runs all the way to the outside east wall. The room is oriented east and west. A 3" raised platform runs around the lodge room on the north, east and west walls. The platform is 3'-0" wide on the north and south walls and 6'-0" wide on the east wall. An 8" raised platform is centered on the west wall framed by the entrance door and a door leading into another small room.
2. Stairway: A wood staircase forms a "U" shape as it runs along the west wall to a landing at the southwest corner, then along the south wall to another landing, then north for a flight of seven steps.
3. Flooring: Vertical grain fir.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: All interior walls are of wood planks. The exterior walls have a double thickness of boards. The ceilings are of 1x5 T&G boards.
5. Doorways and Doors: Four paneled wood doors.

6. Trim: Wood trim, lacking mouldings.
7. Hardware: Original - cast iron.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: Located on what was probably the main street of the town of Elkhorn and oriented east and west.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: None extant.
4. Walks: A wood plank walk ran in front of the building.
5. Landscaping: None.

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APPROVED:

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